

STANDING LIKE A TREE

Building Qi Power

As Taught by Master Tianyou Hao



The Practice of Zhan Zhuang
By Har Har Khalsa

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INTRODUCTION

What is Standing Like a Tree?

Zhan Zhuang is a Chinese Qigong standing practice for health, that is also known as *Standing Like a Tree* in English. *Standing Like a Tree* practice originated centuries ago for the purpose of health and well-being. This practice involves standing straight, in a muscularly balanced posture, with the feet wider than the shoulders and the knees bent (*Horse Stance*). The concept of this form is to stand straight in a relaxed and aligned posture, while also drawing the flow of Qi from Earth and Heaven. *Standing Like a Tree* is a metaphor for the specifics of this form. Standing still with the feet firmly planted on the ground, while drawing Qi from the Earth, is comparable to a tree, with its roots gaining sustenance from the soil. Also, our head receiving the Qi flow from the heavens, is like a tree receiving sunlight for nourishment.

Our *Standing Like a Tree* form is actually considered a meditation practice. Typically, we may think of meditation as a sitting practice. *Standing Like a Tree* is sometimes regarded as a more effective form of meditation because we remain physically alert while also in a meditative state. Additionally, the feet and legs play a role in the *Standing Like a Tree* meditation, as they become receptors for the Qi drawn from the field of the Earth. Since the meditation posture is in a standing position, the feet can receive *Earth Qi* more powerfully than if one were sitting.

There are many forms of *Standing Like a Tree*. However, there are key elements required to perform this practice correctly. Sometimes practitioners hold tension in the body, yet like a tree, we must relax into a planted stance. The second matter of great importance is body alignment. When the body is properly aligned, we stand without the need to compensate for a left or right imbalance in the posture. An aligned body from head to toe allows for an unhindered flow of Qi throughout all limbs and joints.

When *Standing Like a Tree* is combined with mentally leading the Qi with the breath, it becomes a highly effective Qigong practice. Coordination of posture, breath, and concentration usually takes time to develop. We therefore suggest building the amount of *Standing Like a Tree* practice time, starting with five to ten minutes a day. Later, practice can gradually be expanded to twenty-five or thirty minutes a day. *Tai Chi* and Qigong practitioners often spend three to five years of regular *Standing Like a Tree* practice to truly build their Qi flow and physical strength.

CHAPTER ONE

Why Practice *Standing Like a Tree*?



Standing Like a Tree is considered one of the foundations of Qigong practice. It is said that if we have not learned *Standing Like a Tree*, then we have not learned basic Qigong. If we choose to dedicate ourselves to learning the art of this form, we will gain tremendous benefit. Additionally, we can expect rapid results in our practice, provided that *Standing Like a Tree* is performed properly. There are numerous benefits that can be gained through *Standing Like a Tree* practice. The following are a few examples.

Standing Like a Tree Opens Qi Flow in Meridians

As with other *Medical Qigong* applications, *Standing Like a Tree* is also designed to open the *channels* (known as *meridians*) so that Qi will flow smoothly throughout the body. If there are blockages in the *channels* of our body, they

will impact our physical, mental, and emotional well-being. When the *channels* of the body open with a healthy flow of Qi, then we will have strong and radiant health. *Standing Like a Tree* helps us to open the bodily *channels* and increase Qi flow rapidly and effectively.

Standing Like a Tree Opens Qi Flow in Energy Gates

In our *Standing Like a Tree* form, we apply continuous concentration to develop awareness of the incoming Qi through key *energy gates*. We utilize the *energy gates* located on top of the head, the bottom of the feet, and at the lower abdomen during our standing practice. These *energy gates* are highly significant for sensing, drawing, and moving Qi throughout the body. As we apply daily concentration to these *energy gates*, our awareness grows, which in turn helps our ability to use Qi. Through the *energy gate* called the *Bai Hui*, located at the top of the head, we draw in *Heaven Qi*. *Heaven Qi* is a Yang-like energy that enters our body through this point, like sunshine nourishing the trees. The *Heaven Qi* entering the *Bai Hui* point revitalizes brain functions, bodily glands, and *meridians*. Although we naturally receive *Heaven Qi* to a given extent, the conscious intent of drawing Qi through the *Bai Hui* increases the flow of energy. From this practice, we learn to identify an *inflow sensation* of *Heaven Qi* entering through this *energy gate*.

At the feet, we have the *energy gates* known as the *Yongquan* or *Bubbling Springs* points. In our *Standing Like a Tree* practice, we focus our attention at the *Yongquan* points as well to develop an *inflow sensation* of the *Earth Qi*.

The combined focus of Qi flow from our head and feet then converges into the *energy gate* known as *Xia Dantien*,

located below the navel and inside the body. The mind and breath drawn here also increase our awareness of the *Xia Dantien energy gate*.

It is highly significant for Qigong practitioners to develop awareness of these key *energy gates*, as they are gateways of Qi flow that produce physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Standing Like a Tree Balances Yin-Yang Energies

To create equilibrium, we must balance the Yang-like *Heaven Qi* with the Yin-like *Earth Qi*. As we know, our body works to evenly regulate heating, cooling, absorption, and elimination. In the same way, we need to create balance with the opposing qualities of Yin and Yang in order to achieve optimal health and well-being. Therefore, in our *Standing Like a Tree* practice we draw in *Earth Qi* as well as *Heaven Qi*. This occurs by drawing in Qi through the *Yongquan* points and the *Bai Hui* points simultaneously.

Gathering *Earth Qi* through our feet will draw Yin energy into our body and open the *channels* that run up the legs. Just as a tree is nourished through its roots, the *Earth Qi* is designed to feed and sustain our body as well.

Drawing in the *Heaven Qi* will promote the Yang energy in our body and open the *channels* that run down through the head. This would be comparable to how a tree is nourished by sunlight.

At *Xia Dantien*, we then gather this mixture of both the *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi*, bringing a balance of Yin and Yang energies drawn into the body. Our *Standing Like a Tree*

practice thus blends the Yin and Yang forces into one, creating mental and physical balance and equilibrium.

Gain Qi Ability in Standing Like a Tree

In *Standing Like a Tree* practice, we breathe in, drawing *Heaven Qi* through the *Bai Hui*, and *Earth Qi* through the *Bubbling Springs* points, and collecting the Qi at *Xia Dantien*. Then, we breathe out, guiding the Qi through the arms, hands, and fingers. This enhances Qi flow, and it opens and clears the related *meridians*. We call this technique *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*. Using *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* in our *Standing Like a Tree* practice is a key for learning to move Qi through the body.

By feeling the continuous sensitivity of energy moving through our palms, we learn how to gather and move Qi with the hands. We begin to become conscious of the interaction of our hands and fingers in relationship to the *Qi field* around us. Once this ability awakens with our hands, we realize that our palms and fingers can be sophisticated tools for collecting and directing Qi.



In essence, we are rediscovering our natural ability to sense, gather, and move *Universal Qi* (the combination of *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi*) through the body.

Gain Qi Healing Ability in Standing Like a Tree

By moving Qi through the *energy gates* and out through the hands and fingers, we can also develop the ability to heal others. As Qi is gathered and moved repeatedly through our *energy gates* and *channels* by the power of our mind, Qi flow grows stronger and stronger. We can then project the Qi through the hands and fingers for healing. Some practitioners have also used this force for non-touch martial arts ability, moving opponents through the manipulation of Qi. This same ability can be used to heal others. The sensitivity in our hands can grow to the extent that the hands can sense and diagnose what is occurring in another's body. At the very least, one can develop the capability to use the hands to move Qi, regulate Qi, and clear sickness Qi from another's body. (For more information on this topic, visit *Qi Healing Power* at: <https://qihealingpower.com/qi-healing/>).

Heal the Body through Standing Like a Tree Postures

Different variations of *Standing Like a Tree* can also be used to focus *energetic* attention at specific areas of the body. Since our hands and fingers are such sophisticated tools for gathering and directing Qi, we can greatly affect the body, depending on where our hands are stationed. For example, the hands placed in front of the abdomen will impact the *Lower Dantien*, or *Xia Dantien* during *Standing Like a Tree* practice. This will benefit the surrounding organs of the body located in the abdominal area. If we raise the arms and hands to the level of the chest, we can positively impact the heart and lungs (or raise them a little higher at the throat to benefit

the thyroid). Holding our arms and hands about sixty degrees upward, at the level of the forehead in *Standing Like a Tree* practice, benefits the brain and related glands.

The hands can therefore work together in *Standing Like a Tree* as instruments for directing Qi flow toward many areas of the body. Typically, the hands face each other in a parallel fashion in most *Standing Like a Tree* practices. This creates a ball of Qi between the hands which is classically used in *Tai Chi* and Qigong, because it concentrates the Qi. By using the two flat hands together to create a *Qi Ball*, we can then direct that field of energy into the body through a *Closed Energy Form* of *Standing Like a Tree* practice. A *Closed Energy Form* is done by holding curved hands angled toward the body to direct the Qi inward.

A *Standing Like a Tree* practitioner may also utilize the *Sword Fingers* position (pointing the index and middle fingers straight while locking the ring and little finger under the thumb) to strengthen and heal the entire body rapidly. The *Sword Fingers* technique is said to stimulate the *meridians* of the heart as well as other *meridians*, which produces cardiovascular health.

Through *Standing Like a Tree*, Qi flow will grow stronger, and chronic health issues can begin to heal. It strengthens the nervous system, muscles, circulatory system, heart, skeletal system, glandular system, brain, and internal organs. The entire body improves from the combination of the physical position and the internal flow of Qi in this practice. The strength and energy that *Standing Like a Tree* gives can be phenomenal. The *Horse Stance* position alone in *Standing Like a Tree* builds physical vitality. Many may not realize

how much internal strength is lacking until they practice this form. Even strong and athletic people may have difficulty doing *Standing Like a Tree* at the beginning, signifying some level of weakness in their internal health. This is because the *channels* in the body need to open to build a strong nervous system. Therefore, it is not necessarily muscular health, but rather internal health that is developed through *Standing Like a Tree* practice. When performing *Standing Like a Tree*, some pain and shaking may occur as the body works to clear the *channels* and strengthen itself. After a person has regularly performed *Standing Like a Tree* for some time, they will likely discover that their body no longer feels pain, because they have opened certain *channels* (*meridians*). Then that person can stand for a long time without tiring or pain because the practice improved their internal health. In fact, *Standing Like a Tree* may sometimes energize the practitioner after they are finished. Even if a person is feeling slightly ill, they can practice *Standing Like a Tree* to help heal faster. If an individual can tolerate *Standing Like a Tree* during a mild cold, it is said to improve their health despite any discomfort they might endure. In any case, standing practice may be difficult or painful at first, if minor and undetected health issues exist.

“*Good Medicine Tastes Bitter*”

Confucius

Based on the numerous benefits that our *Standing Like a Tree* form can provide, it is a small sacrifice of time and dedication to obtain the rewards of this practice. If we devote twenty to thirty minutes a day, five to seven days a week, we will discover that *Standing Like a Tree* practice positively changes our health and well-being in many ways!

Standing Like a Tree Benefits

- ☯ *Standing Like a Tree* builds strength and health to the nervous system, muscles, circulatory system, heart, skeletal system, glandular system, brain, and internal organs
- ☯ *Standing Like a Tree* opens the body *channels* and *energy gates* so that Qi flows smoothly, thereby clearing physical, mental, and emotional blockages
- ☯ With regular *Standing Like a Tree* practice, the body gains sufficient Qi for healing and Qi circulation
- ☯ *Standing Like a Tree* keeps the body balanced internally (Yin-Yang balance)
- ☯ *Standing Like a Tree* can heal chronic illnesses and health issues while strengthening and toning the body
- ☯ *Standing Like a Tree* practice can help heal or prevent the onset of a cold
- ☯ *Standing Like a Tree* provides the practitioner with energy and stamina.
- ☯ *Standing Like a Tree* practice can bring the ability to heal others

CHAPTER TWO

Aligning The Body



*“When your body is not aligned,
The inner power will not come”*

Neiye Text

Prior to beginning *Standing Like a Tree* practice, it is essential to have proper body alignment. Our body is a sensitive instrument that serves as a receptor for Qi flow. The subtlest shifts to our spine and posture can make a profound difference in how Qi can flow through our entire body. Holding a posture incorrectly can block the flow of Qi. It can also cause tension in the body due to muscles compensating for an unnatural body position. Tension and improper alignment will greatly affect our practice. Therefore, proper body alignment is emphasized in *Standing Like a Tree* to balance the muscles evenly on both sides so that Qi will flow optimally.

Aligning the Feet

In the *Standing Like a Tree* position, we align our feet so that they are parallel. We consider the feet to be comparable to the foundation stones of a structure. When these stones are set in the precise angle and direction, they support the stones that are stacked above them. This analogy refers to supporting the legs and pelvis through proper placement of the feet. When practicing *Standing Like a Tree*, we minimize joint and muscle stress by first aligning the feet, which then firmly supports our legs and pelvis.



Correct

Incorrect

Keeping the feet parallel becomes especially important when the pelvis is shifted forward in our stance. In the *Standing Like a Tree* posture, we hold a *Horse Stance* with the knees slightly bent and the tailbone tucked in. If the feet are turned inward or outward while the knees are bent and the hips are thrust forward, it can create tension and harm the joints. Therefore, it's important that the feet are parallel so that the knees align straight over the toes.

Another important aspect of the *Standing Like a Tree* form involves *rooting* the feet firmly into the ground. *Rooting* means that the feet hug the ground evenly as if they are connected to the earth, like roots of a tree. To achieve this, we apply sixty percent of our weight onto the back heels

while also distributing the weight evenly on both feet. The balls of the feet and toes also firmly contact the ground with the other forty percent of the weight evenly placed there. For this to occur, the weight must be distributed equally on each leg. Then by placing a conscious effort to lightly grip the ground with the toes, we can *root* the feet to the ground.

Since the feet are receptors for the field of energy from the Earth, their alignment, distribution of weight, and *rooting* are highly significant in terms of Qi flow. Aligning the feet in this way will thus allow for increased receptivity to *Earth Qi* while performing *Standing Like a Tree* practice.

Aligning the Knees

As indicated, in the *Standing Like a Tree* form, we want the knees to slightly bend and align over our parallel feet. The gentle bend in the knees along with the hips forward are important elements for establishing a balanced center of gravity in our body. For safety, we suggest not bending the knees beyond the toes, even if we choose a wider *Horse Stance*.

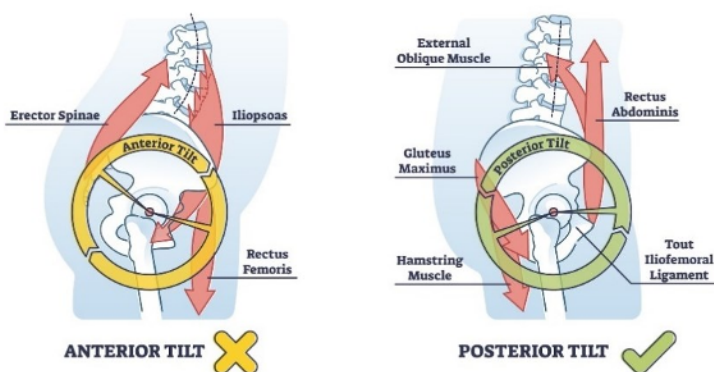
There is a technique for bending the knees in Qigong stances that is taught in *Wudang Mountain*, China. Instead of thinking of bending the knees, collapse the abdomen inward while gently moving the thighs and hips forward. This automatically causes the knees to bend. When we get the hang of this, we can feel the weight distributed properly in such a way that it lessens the impact on the knee joints.

Pelvic Alignment

In *Standing Like a Tree*, proper pelvic alignment is highly significant because it aligns the hips and torso in such a way that *Earth Qi* and *Heaven Qi* can travel freely through the body. By tucking the tailbone inward and bending at the knees, the pelvis shifts forward to the correct position. Since the angle of the pelvis impacts the feet, knees, legs, and entire torso, an incorrect position of the hips can offset our entire body balance and alignment. Once we align the feet and knees appropriately along with the tilted pelvic position, the lower half of our body becomes a solid conduit for Qi flow.

As discussed, the feet represent the foundation stones of a structure. Thus, the pelvis can be thought of as the keystone of a building, supported by the feet and legs. This alignment assists us to stand with less effort and stress on the entire body. Therefore, proper lower body alignment alone will bring greater benefits to our *Standing Like a Tree* practice.

Apply A Posterior Pelvic Tilt



Aligning the Chest and Back

We want to keep the back straight in the *Standing Like a Tree* position while avoiding the chest from excessively collapsing inward. The Qi can potentially become blocked if

the chest is collapsed, causing the diaphragm to be closed. It should also be understood that excessively protruding the chest forward is counterproductive to the *Standing Like a Tree* form, as it causes muscular stress on the back. To align the chest, we gently lift the torso, without flexing the spine forward. Then the trunk of the body will firmly rest on the positioned hips and legs.

We also slightly round the back, without collapsing the chest. Even though the chest is held open, the back is not arched, rather it remains rounded. The proper chest alignment and rounding of the back then balance the body and shift most of the weight to the back heels.



Rounded Back Chest Up

Aligning the Arms

After we have rounded the back, the arms can easily roll forward so that they marginally *bow* outward. This will require the forearms to gently rotate inward, causing them to slightly *bow*. This way the arms do not press into the armpits, allowing the lymph glands to drain. As the arms *bow* outward, the elbows will also have a gentle and natural bend in them. In this way, we keep the arms and elbows relaxed

and not locked. When the arms and elbows are held without tension, Qi flow can move through several *meridians* located in the arms. Even when the arms are held at a risen position in *Standing Like a Tree* posture, we can continue to maintain a gentle *bow* of the arms, without fully locking the elbows.

Aligning the Abdomen

When we shift the pelvic weight forward with bent knees, and round the entire back, the abdomen naturally draws inward. This way we are not consciously pulling the abdomen in, rather we are slightly collapsing it through our posture adjustments. If done correctly, no tension or tightness will occur from the abdomen drawing in. When all these elements of body posture occur in unison, each portion of the body evenly counterbalances the other. As suggested, gently collapsing the abdomen inward will create a bend in the knees, but it will also cause the back to round. Therefore, gently collapsing the abdomen inward helps initiate some of our body alignment suggestions.

While maintaining all these factors of body alignment, our posture must remain erect. Further, it is essential that the body is relaxed in this position. We need to discover how to integrate proper body alignment into a natural way of standing. This will reduce pain and fatigue that could occur when practicing *Standing Like a Tree*, while also enhancing the benefits.

We describe the curvatures illustrated in the body alignment techniques as the *Five Bows*. This refers to slightly bending both arms, bending both knees, and rounding the back with the abdomen inward. Basically, we are keeping the body

rounded and loose, without rigidly locking any joints, so that Qi can smoothly flow through all parts of our body.



Aligning the Shoulders

After aligning the trunk and arms, we ensure that the shoulders are also relaxed. The shoulders can hold tension from years of stress or strain. Sometimes we are not even aware that we hold our shoulders tightly. In such a case, we need to make a conscious effort to allow the shoulders to loosen and drop. This will help to promptly change our physical and mental disposition in a positive way and relax the entire body further. Qi will flow more smoothly when our shoulders release tension because they connect to our arms and neck, affecting many *meridians*. Therefore, relaxing the shoulders greatly benefits *Standing Like a Tree* practice.

Aligning the Neck

Often, the chin may tend to rest forward, shifting the position of our neck. If we lightly push the chin back with our

fingertips, we can guide the neck to be straight. As we draw our chin in, we also do not tighten or tilt it downward. When straightening the neck, we also avoid locking it, which would hinder the Qi flow to our head. We therefore want to keep the neck erect without holding any tension.

Aligning the Head

Aligning the head properly also assists with straightening the neck. We use the concept of an imaginary thread suspending the head from the top rear point of the crown, known as the *Bai Hui energy gate*. The *Bai Hui energy gate* can be located by drawing a straight line upward on either side of the head, beginning from the tops of the ears. Once we locate the general area of the *Bai Hui energy gate*, we can feel an imaginary thread lifting the head from that point. Though we do not physically pull the head upward, feeling the imaginary thread drawing from the *Bai Hui* point will compel us to straighten our posture. While adjusting the position of the head, it is essential that we do not create tension. This subtle adjustment to the head will then invoke the *Heaven Qi* to flow through the *Bai Hui*, which is one of the primary aspects of our *Standing Like a Tree* practice.



Incorrect

Correct

When we are correctly aligned in the *Standing Like a Tree* position, the head will remain straight as well. Sometimes our head may tend to tilt to one side or another, or even forward, affecting the flow of Qi. In order to have a direct current of *Heaven Qi* flowing through the body, the head is to be stationed symmetrically in an upright position.

Facial Alignment

We also adjust our face before beginning *Standing Like a Tree* practice, as the natural position of our face stimulates relaxation. When we relax our face, we can smile naturally. A natural smile will bring about mental and emotional relaxation, which also corresponds to physical relaxation.

Sometimes we have worries or concerns, or even excessive thoughts which appear in the expression of our face. The forehead may raise, or the eyebrows may furrow. We therefore relax our forehead and brow as a part of our facial alignment technique. Similar to smiling in a natural way, relaxing the forehead and brow will impact our physical, mental, and emotional well-being, enhancing Qi flow to the *meridians* of the face and head.

Balanced Posture

When performing *Standing Like a Tree*, it is important to distribute the weight of the entire body evenly. We may have a habit of shifting our weight to one side of the body or another. Having our body weight unevenly distributed for a lengthy period of time will likely cause pain and/or physical and *energetic* imbalances. This is because the body will overly compensate on one side or another for skeletal and muscular unevenness.

Once we align the entire body in an even and balanced way, while remaining deeply relaxed, we will maximize our stream of energy. Then, an unobstructed flow of Qi will enter and move through us from ground and sky, or Earth and Heaven. With balanced body alignment, we can increase our standing time and experience positive results in our *Standing Like a Tree* practice.

Body Alignment Review

- ☯ The feet remain parallel, with the hips shifted forward
- ☯ Maintain a bend in the knees, and round the back and arms, while consciously relaxing the shoulders
- ☯ Gently lift the chest, draw in the chin, and keep the head erect
- ☯ Smile and relax the forehead and brow
- ☯ Distribute body weight evenly
- ☯ Keep the whole body relaxed yet aligned

CHAPTER THREE

Jing Gong *To Enhance Standing Practice*



For optimal results in *Standing Like a Tree* practice, we must free ourselves from physical and emotional tension. If we are internally relaxed, both physically and mentally, we have captured the essence of Qigong. When our body is relaxed and we have a pleasant state of mind, our *channels* open, and Qi flows more smoothly. Once we are deeply relaxed, our *Standing Like a Tree* practice becomes greatly enhanced.

Oftentimes we need to learn how to be consciously calm and relaxed. To become calm and tranquil, we can systematically relax the body in a meditative fashion. A fundamental practice designed for the purpose of internal relaxation is called *Jing Gong*, or *Quiet Form*. In the practice of *Jing Gong*, we use unique breath regulation techniques and

concentration to relax the entire body. Through *Jing Gong*, we reach a state of deep, internal calm.

The ease and tranquility we gain through *Jing Gong* practice enriches our *Standing Like a Tree* form. Then, when we perform *Standing Like a Tree*, we will not be distracted by physical or emotional distress. And as a result, Qi flow and concentration will increase. Our ability to deeply relax represents the depth of our Qigong skill. Therefore, *Jing Gong* is an essential Qigong practice for enhancing our *Standing Like a Tree* form.

Jing Gong practice is made up of the following elements:

- 1) Setting the Body Position
- 2) Fang Song – *Conscious and Systematic Relaxation*
- 3) Breath Regulation Techniques
- 4) Qi Chen Xia Dantien - *Qi Go Down to the Abdomen*
- 5) Reverse Abdominal Breathing
- 6) Keeping the Mind in Xia Dantien (Lower Abdomen)

The Three Adjustments Preparation

Before we begin *Jing Gong* practice, we need to adjust ourselves mentally and physically to prepare for meditation. In order to do this, we perform what is called the *Three Adjustments*. The *Three Adjustments* are comprised of: 1) situating the body into a relaxed and comfortable position, 2) altering the breath to be slow and smooth, and 3) placing the mind to concentration.

If we perform the *Three Adjustments* prior to *Jing Gong* practice, we can attain deeper awareness. Otherwise, we may spend precious meditation time on calming the restless mind and on making the body comfortable and focused.

Basics of the Three Adjustments:

- 1) Adjust the body alignment and set yourself in a relaxed and comfortable position. Remove your watches and eyeglasses.
- 2) Adjust the breath by making the breath slow and smooth, breathing lightly through the nose.
- 3) Adjust the mind to concentration. Stop thinking about daily affairs and focus the mind at the lower abdomen.

We suggest spending one or two minutes performing the *Three Adjustments* in preparation for *Jing Gong* practice.

After we have performed the *Three Adjustments*, we go further into the depths of internal relaxation of the body through *Jing Gong* practice. In essence, the *Jing Gong* form continues to utilize aspects of the *Three Adjustments*. The *Jing Gong* practice will basically apply additional techniques of the *Three Adjustments* that further regulate, or *adjust* the body, breath, and mind.

Jing Gong Practice

Part I –Setting the Body Position

In part one of *Jing Gong* practice, we will review some basic body alignment practices geared toward a sitting meditation posture.

1. We recommend sitting erect on a chair with the hands on the knees and the feet flat on the floor. If necessary, place a cushion on the chair to raise the pelvis higher so that the thighs do not angle upward while in a sitting position. The thighs should angle either level or downward. This prevents Qi flow from becoming blocked at the waist.

2. Then, relax both shoulders and loosen the elbows. Sometimes the shoulders are held tightly, causing tension. Consciously release whatever tightness may be held in the shoulders. Also, during meditation, some people may lock their elbows straight. As stated, we do not lock any limbs in our practice to avoid Qi flow from becoming restricted.
3. Next, lightly draw up the chest and straighten the back. This is done without any straining or tightening; the chest is not overly thrust forward.
4. Gently draw the chin inward and keep the head and neck erect.
5. Touch the tip of the tongue to the upper palate.
6. Swallow excessive saliva that is produced during *Jing Gong* practice. (Saliva is considered a spiritual fluid in *Medical Qigong* philosophy).
7. Keep a natural smile and relax the face and forehead. This means that we do not wrinkle the forehead or furrow the brows.
8. Focus the eyes at a level height between the brow, while keeping the eyelids only slightly open (*one tenth open*).
9. Be aware not to focus on distant sounds in order to concentrate inwardly. Our mind is no longer present in our practice when we place our attention on sounds that are far off.

10. Keep the spine straight and do not allow the waist to collapse left or right or shift forward or backward. Thus, our posture remains centered.
11. Continue breathing slow and smooth, keeping the breath relaxed.



Part II – Fang Song

After we are sitting in a relaxed and meditative state, we begin the second part of our *Jing Gong* practice. This portion of *Jing Gong* is for conscious relaxation of each part of the body, done in coordination with chanting the word “*Fàngsōng*”. *Fang Song* in *Jing Gong* practice means to deeply relax the body. *Fang Song* is chanted to relax the body systematically from head to toe. When we concentrate on relaxing one part of the body at a time, we can go deeper, beyond superficial relaxation. This means that we concentrate on relaxing each part of body into the depths of all tissue, muscles, joints, internal organs, and bones. This, in turn, removes energy blockages and increases our Qi flow and awareness.

We recommend using one of our *Fang Song* recordings to listen to while practicing this relaxation process. This may help with concentrating deeply on each part of the body when hearing the chant. Alternatively, a practitioner can make their own recording of *Fang Song*, chanted to approximately sound like *Faonng Sōnnnng*. The note can be held about a ½ second when chanting *Fang*, and about two seconds when chanting *Song*. Combining this sound with the mental focus will relax the body more deeply.

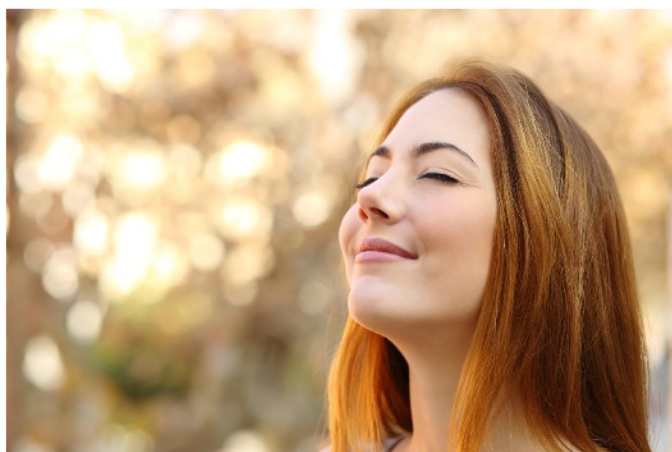
Fang Song Meditation

Begin by listening to *Fang Song* being chanted, while concentrating deeply on relaxing one part of the body at a time, starting from the head, and moving down to the feet.

1. Relax the top of the head; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
2. Relax the face; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
3. Relax the whole head; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
4. Relax the neck; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
5. Relax the shoulders; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
6. Relax the arms; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
7. Relax the elbows; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
8. Relax the hands; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
9. Relax the chest & back; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
10. Relax the waist & abdomen; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
11. Relax the buttocks; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
12. Relax the thighs; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
13. Relax the knees; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
14. Relax the lower legs; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
15. Relax the ankles; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
16. Relax the feet; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
17. Relax the whole body; “*Faonng Sōnnnng*”
18. Repeat steps 1-17 one more time.

We can choose to practice the *Fang Song* chant mentally, or with a recording played while meditating.

Below is a link to a recording of the *Fang Song* chant:
<https://soundcloud.com/har-har-khalsa/fang-song-body-relaxation-chant>



Part III – Six Breath Regulations

In this third part of *Jing Gong*, we begin applying *Six Breath Regulations* to further adjust the breath. These regulations are as follows:

1. Breathe Slow
2. Breathe Long
3. Breathe Thin
4. Breathe Even
5. Breathe Soft
6. Breathe Silent

Breathe Slow

We begin by adjusting the breath to make it slow. By breathing slowly, we can remain calm and be present. This breath regulation assists with slowing excessive mental activity, so we can focus on the practice. Additionally, slowing the breath will open the *channels*, allowing for improved Qi and blood flow. Ultimately, we will feel tranquil by regulating the breath in this manner.

Breathe Long

If we inhale filling our lungs to at least seventy percent full, and deeply exhale that breath, it will greatly oxygenate the body. When we inhale and exhale longer breaths, we do not want to strain to achieve this. Long breaths are to occur in an easy and effortless manner. This way, the long breathing also releases tension and relaxes and clears the mind.

Breathe Thin

When we push the breath, it becomes heavy. Sometimes we even compress the breath in a slow but pressurized way. To make the breath thin, the inhale and exhale is to be light. The respiratory system must also be relaxed so that we do not strain to draw in air. When we are deeply relaxed, both mentally and physically, our breathing will change so that it is easier to draw in thin breaths.

Breathe Even

We also want to keep a consistent tempo and force in our breathing so that it is even. Ultimately, we want to keep our breathing slow, thin, and long at all times during practice. Therefore, we strive for uniformity in our breathing. It is also important not to strain in order to maintain a consistency of breath, so that we sustain a relaxed frame of mind.

Another factor in even breathing is to keep the inhale comparable to the exhale as much as comfortably possible. This way, we balance Yin and Yang, which will impact our mental and physical state in *Jing Gong* practice. Our inhale and exhale will inevitably be unequal; therefore, it is not necessary to maintain identical in and out breath durations.

Breathe Soft

Making the breath soft is very similar to making the breath thin, except that it is more of an effortless way of breathing.

It is as if we are allowing the breath to come in and out without any regulation, on its own accord. When the breath is automatically soft, it is *regulating without regulating*, which refers to a stage of *cultivating* Qi automatically without effort. To make the breath soft, we must also breathe slowly, thinly, silently, and evenly. Then a smooth flow of breath occurs, like a soft stream of energy moving in and out of our body.

Breathe Silent

By making the breath silent, we will help perpetuate slow, thin, and long breaths. Sound indicates that force or tension is occurring while breathing. When we make our breathing quiet, it will naturally compel us to relax internally, as we are not using sound to expel stress or tightness. Breathing silently thus tells ourselves to be in a state of ease, which then impacts all the other breathing regulation techniques.

We might have realized that each of these *Six Breath Regulations* affects the other, as all six techniques are interdependent and interrelated. When we combine all six breathing methods together, they assist in complementing each other, to bring about the ideal regulation of breath. Then our mental and physical state can go into a heightened state of awareness, increasing the benefits of *Jing Gong* practice.

Part IV - Qi Chen Xia Dantien

The fourth part of *Jing Gong* is called *Qi Chen Xia Dantien*. In *Jing Gong* practice, *Qi Chen Xia Dantien* means to draw the Qi down to the lower abdomen, or *Xia Dantien*, in coordination with our exhale. The *Xia Dantien*, located just below the navel (1.7 inches) and inside the abdomen, is where we can store and build Qi. *Xia Dantien* is a bio-battery

that stores Qi and powers the flow of Qi throughout the body. Once we learn how to direct Qi flow to *Xia Dantien*, our *channels* open, and internal quietude is enhanced.

To perform *Qi Chen Xia Dantien*, simply breathe in, and then exhale while mentally guiding the Qi to *Xia Dantien*. The mind basically *compacts* (mentally compresses) the Qi toward *Xia Dantien* as the breath goes out. It can feel as if the breath is leaving the body through the lower abdomen as we exhale.

As we inhale, we may also feel as if we are breathing in from the lower abdomen and slowly filling the breath into the diaphragm. After the diaphragm fills and slightly lifts, we then exhale. On the exhale, the mental *compacting* of Qi down to the lower abdomen occurs, along with the physical movement of gently pressing downward below the navel. The physical motion combined with mentally compressing into *Xia Dantien* actually moves and stores Qi downward and into the lower abdomen.

As we perform *Qi Chen Xia Dantien* repeatedly, we may gain insight into many subtleties that are specific to the practitioner. After we begin to draw in Qi and store it into *Xia Dantien*, the experience can be quite unique and empowering, as we will have discovered how to enhance our energy levels and well-being at will.

Part V – Reverse Abdominal Breathing

In part five of *Jing Gong*, we will explore a specific abdominal movement performed in coordination with breathing, known as *Reverse Abdominal Breathing*. The *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* technique will further

generate increased blood flow, oxygen, and Qi flow, bringing about deeper relaxation.

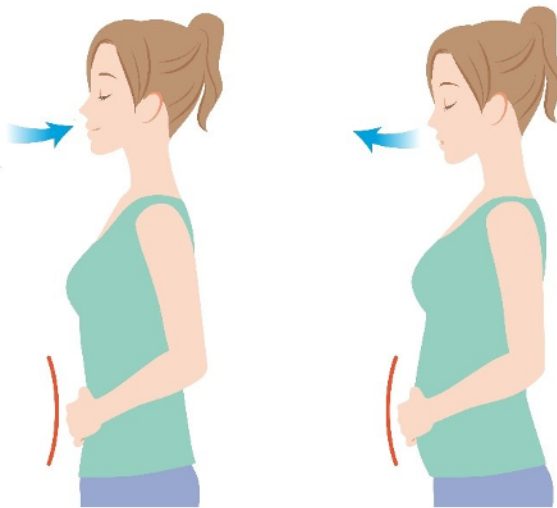
This practice is called *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* because it is opposite of normal breathing, due to the abdomen drawing inward on the inhale and expanding outward on the exhale. This opposite contraction and expansion of the abdomen in *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* causes the diaphragm to slightly move up and down. This motion impacts the lower lungs and increases our oxygen levels. Typically, we do not move the lower part of the lungs enough, resulting in less oxygen absorbed. The *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* technique causes movement in the lower lung cavity, increasing oxygen intake and Qi flow. *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* then brings about deep relaxation to the practitioner, and that is why it is a part of *Jing Gong*.

To perform *Reverse Abdominal Breathing*, we draw in the lower abdomen (*Xia Dantien*) on the inhale, using a gentle inward contraction. On the exhale, the abdomen will expand outward while *compacting* the Qi down to *Xia Dantien*. The downward compacting of Qi into the lower abdomen is basically identical to how we compact the Qi in the *Qi Chen Xia Dantien* technique. Thus, *Qi Chen Xia Dantien* and *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* are performed simultaneously during *Jing Gong* practice.

In addition to performing *Qi Chen Xia Dantien* along with *Reverse Abdominal Breathing*, we also practice the *Six Breath Regulations*. In essence, the *Six Breath Regulations*, *Qi Chen Xia Dantien*, and *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* are

performed concurrently, as each of these three parts make up one practice of the *Jing Gong* form.

Blending these practices and techniques together will then build the Qi in *Xia Dantien* so it can feed the body's *meridians* and *energy gates*. This in turn will prepare us further for *Standing Like a Tree* practice, as we may include these breathing techniques into our standing form.



Reverse Abdominal Breathing

1. On the inhale, the abdomen draws inward, with a subtle lifting of the diaphragm and lower ribs.
2. On the exhale, the abdomen and diaphragm gently expand outward and downward.
3. On the exhale, also *compact* the Qi down into the lower abdomen, or *Xia Dantien*.
4. Continue performing *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* (V), along with the *Six Breath Regulations* (IV), and *Qi Chen Xia Dantien* (III). Continue these combined practices of *Jing Gong*; Part III, IV, and V for ten to twenty minutes.

Note: Avoid excessive contraction or pressurization of muscles during the inhale or exhale. *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* is done in a relaxed and smooth manner. Always breathe through the nose.

Progression of Practice Over Time

We suggest beginning practice of *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* to be roughly 4 to 6 cycles per minute. One cycle refers to one inhale and exhale combined. Hence, 4 cycles per minute would be approximately fifteen seconds per each inhale and exhale combined, while 6 cycles per minute equals approximately ten seconds per each inhale and exhale combined.

It is not necessary to pressure ourselves to make the inhale and exhale equivalent lengths, as they will naturally be different. Also, the timing of the breath cycles must not be forced, as they should be based on a gentle way of regulating the breath to become slower, without any straining or tension.

After practicing for a while, we can usually slow our breath further and take in more oxygen as well. We may then be able to comfortably progress to 2 or 3 breath cycles per minute. An advanced level of this practice is to develop *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* to be 3 breath cycles per two minutes. This equates to an approximate 40 seconds per each inhale and exhale cycle. We suggest building up to this standard over a period of six months to one year, after practicing for a minimum of twenty minutes per day. It is also important that the practitioner can comfortably maintain slower breathing cycles consistently, as opposed to breathing slower for only a portion of their practice.

Benefits of Reverse Abdominal Breathing

Reverse Abdominal Breathing is a major key to building Qi in the body, leading to health and longevity. There are numerous *Medical Qigong* benefits from *Reverse Abdominal Breathing*. For example, *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* creates a push at the diaphragm as we breathe in, due to the gentle upward contraction of the abdomen. This in turn impacts the lower lungs. Since we normally breathe in the opposite way, the lower lungs are not usually fully stimulated. *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* causes the lower lungs to take in more oxygen, which improves our health. However, if all oxygen taken into our lungs is not utilized, it may be detrimental, or at least less effective. We want to have a larger lung capacity so that more oxygen can be absorbed through the entire cavity of the lung. *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* is a practice for developing a greater lung capacity.

Many people have some level of health issues concerning their lower lungs, even if there are not any notable symptoms. Practicing *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* can prevent many health issues by removing toxins and by relieving physical and mental stress through movement of the diaphragm.

Studies show that people who practice Qigong breathing techniques expand their diaphragm by three to seven centimeters (1 to 2.75 inches). If the diaphragm expands even one centimeter (a little more than 1/3 of an inch), we will take in and utilize twenty-five to thirty milliliters (about 6%) more oxygen per breath. Therefore, people who develop a highly expanded diaphragm can take in up to 50% more oxygen.

Additionally, *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* acts as an internal massage for the abdominal organs, impacting our digestion and nutrient absorption by means of movement in the lower abdomen. In *Medical Qigong* practices, abdominal massage is a technique for keeping the internal organs healthy and for releasing physical and emotional stress held there. This in turn activates Qi flow to the *meridians* that interconnect with our internal organs. As with many other simple Qigong forms, the practice of *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* carries enormous health benefits.

Part VI - Keeping the Mind in Xia Dantien



In the sixth and final part of *Jing Gong*, we progress to a practice called *Keeping the Mind in Xia Dantien*. At this point, we stop the other three practices (*Reverse Abdominal Breathing*, *Six Breath Regulations*, and *Qi Chen Xia Dantien*), and we only perform *Keeping the Mind in Xia Dantien* practice.

To perform *Keeping the Mind in Xia Dantien*, we simply keep our mind present at *Xia Dantien*. As stated, *Xia Dantien* is known to be located within the lower abdomen, approximately 1.7 inches below the navel. Still, when learning to sense *Xia Dantien*, remember that it is an undefined area *within* the lower abdomen. This means, we must discover its location through our own internal awareness.

How to Concentrate on Xia Dantien

Begin by continually remaining present in *Xia Dantien*. Allow the sensation of the lower abdomen to naturally arise. When using imagination of *Xia Dantien*, we harmonize it with physical awareness of the lower abdomen, so that we are working with the mind and body together. Additionally, we use the mind and body to create the sensation of warmth or heat in the lower abdomen, bringing about a comfortable and relaxed feeling. We may also experience a “turning about” sensation, as if there is a ball circulating in the lower abdomen.

When sensing *Xia Dantien*, we may not experience it exactly as described here. Our experience of *Xia Dantien* may be completely different. If this happens, we just allow awareness of *Xia Dantien* to occur without forcing an outcome of how the sensation is *supposed* to be.

It is important to maintain concentration at *Xia Dantien* while also remaining mentally and physically relaxed. Sometimes highly focused attempts at concentrating deeply can cause mental tension. Therefore, we keep the mind present in *Xia Dantien*, allowing the natural sensations to arise.

During this practice, we may listen to the recording provided (see below) or mentally repeat the following statements to maintain awareness and concentration at *Xia Dantien*:

- Think *Dantien*
- See *Dantien*
- There is a fire inside *Dantien*
- Think *Dantien*
- See *Dantien*
- The real Qi is inside *Dantien*
- Move and turn about in *Dantien*
- Think *Dantien*
- See *Dantien*
- The whole body is comfortable, warm, and happy with a pleasant feeling

We mentally repeat these statements above as a guide for deeply feeling *Xia Dantien*. When we “see” *Xia Dantien*, we are seeing with our mind’s eye inside the lower abdomen. We then mentally spin and turn the Qi around in *Xia Dantien* while sensing a warmth that is comfortable and pleasant. We recommend spending five to fifteen minutes on *Keeping the Mind in Xia Dantien* in the manner described above.

Closing Form

After finishing *Jing Gong* practice, it is important to perform *Closing Form* to ground our body and prevent *Qi stagnation*. *Closing Form* includes patting and massaging the body to invigorate blood flow and bring Qi to the external body. This will prevent Qi from accumulating unevenly throughout the body, which could cause health issues, headaches, or light-headedness.

Closing Form Practice:

1. Begin by slowly opening the eyes when *Jing Gong* (or *Standing Like a Tree*) concludes.
2. Rub the palms together, rub between the fingers, and back of the palms for a few seconds. This draws Qi to the hands, fingers, and palms.
3. Then use the palms to massage the forehead and face in one stroke. Rub from inward to outward, toward the scalp and ears. This brings Qi flow to the face.
4. Firmly pinch the sides of the ears and then pinch the lobes and pull them down. Then place both palms on the ears and massage them for a few seconds. This stimulates numerous *meridians* that correspond to the body.
5. Run the fingers of both hands through the scalp from the hairline backwards. Start on top, and then continue to the sides of the head. Perform one repetition. Next, tap the fingers from the front to back of the head. Start on the top, and then proceed to the sides of the head. Perform one repetition. This clears Qi that may be stagnating in the head, and it stimulates the *energy gates* and *meridians* located there.
6. Firmly rub the *Da Zhui* point, which is the big bone located on the back of the neck, for a few seconds. This point corresponds to C-7 on the spine. The *Da Zhui* is the crossing point of Yang *meridians* in the body. Being that this is a great intersection of numerous *meridians*, rubbing this point can open the Qi flow to these *channels*.
7. Begin patting each outer arm downward, starting from the shoulder wells to the back of the palm, one arm at a time. Then reverse with an upward patting of each

- inner arm, starting from the palms to the armpits. Perform one to three repetitions. This opens the Qi flow along the Yin and Yang *meridians* of the arms.
8. Pat down both sides of the chest, esophagus, rib cage, and entire abdomen. Perform one to three repetitions. This brings Qi to the torso and vibrates the internal organs, causing movement and blood flow.
 9. Gently pat the lower back at the base of the ribcage, where the kidneys are located. Perform this for about 15 seconds. This brings movement and Qi flow into the kidneys.
 10. Begin patting the outer side of both legs downward from the sides of the buttocks to the feet. Then reverse, patting the inner legs upward from the feet towards the groin. Perform one to three repetitions. This opens the Qi flow along the Yin and Yang *meridians* of the legs.
 11. While seated, rotate the ankles in both directions. Perform one to three repetitions. Use the hands to rotate the ankles for maximum rotation. This opens Qi flow to the feet.
 12. Slowly and meditatively perform one to three repetitions of *Qi Down to Dantien*. See below for a description of *Qi Down to Dantien*.

Qi Down to Dantien

We conclude *Closing Form* with *Qi Down to Dantien*, performed as follows:

- a. As you breathe in with the palms facing downward, allow the arms to rise to your sides, as if they are floating upward.
- b. The arms then rise overhead, and the palms lightly press together above the head, like *prayer hands*.

- c. Next, as you exhale, both palms move down to the level of the chest, while they remain pressed together.
- d. Then the palms separate at the level of diaphragm, with the fingers now pointing toward each other and the palms facing down. The middle fingers remain touching each other.
- e. Mentally press the Qi to *Xia Dantien* as the palms continue down to the lower abdomen on the exhale.
- f. Then place the left hand under the right hand (male) or the right hand under the left hand (female) at the lower abdomen to store the Qi while circulating the palms clockwise.
- g. Think “Peace”, “Calm”, “Comfortable”.

Note: *Qi Down to Dantien* is done one to three times in a continuous and fluid motion.

The following is an audio link of our guided *Jing Gong* practice, narrated by Master Hao. This will assist practitioners in meditatively performing *Jing Gong*.
<https://on.soundcloud.com/HPLAE> (Short Version)

A full-length practice of *Jing Gong* is also available on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/usK6a6TY0Dg>
(Long Version – Includes English and Chinese Narration)

Jing Gong Practice Notes

- a. Though it is easy to fall asleep during *Jing Gong* practice, it is important to remain awake and alert so that we can properly concentrate.
- b. Our head may tend to fall forward or to one side. During practice, remain conscious of keeping the head upright so that Qi flow is not blocked.

- c. When practicing *Jing Gong*, it is necessary to remain deeply relaxed while also remaining awake so that we can go into a deep state of awareness.
- d. It is suggested to practice *Jing Gong* before bed, though it may be done at any time. We may also do *Jing Gong* before *Standing Like a Tree*.

Four Basic Relaxation Reminders

A technique for remaining relaxed during *Jing Gong* or *Standing Like a Tree* practice is to periodically remind ourselves of four additional regulations. They are as follows:

- 1) **Smooth out the forehead:** Relax the brow and forehead (avoid furrowed brows or a raised forehead).
- 2) **Smile:** Keep a relaxed and natural smile.
- 3) **Relax the shoulders:** Ensure the shoulders and shoulder blades are not held or tightened.
- 4) **Relax the waist and abdomen:** Deeply scan for tension held here, including internal tension in the lower torso.

As stated, many elements of the *Jing Gong* practice are applied to the *Standing Like a Tree* form. Through practice of *Jing Gong*, we will learn to consciously relax the mind and body at will. After experiencing a very tranquil state on a regular basis, our cellular memory of deep relaxation can then be recalled at any time. Relaxation and tranquility are essential for opening the *channels* and Qi flow in *Standing Like a Tree* practice. Once we are deeply relaxed, our mental activity will become slower, allowing the mind to focus inwardly. If we are thinking excessively, we will not be able to consciously lead the Qi with our mind. Consciously leading the Qi is an essential aspect of our *Standing Like a Tree* form.

In *Standing Like a Tree* practice, we also can apply the *Six Breath Regulations* and the *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* technique performed in *Jing Gong*. Therefore, taking the time and patience to learn and practice these elements of *Jing Gong* will provide valuable tools for the *Standing Like a Tree* practitioner.

- ☯ *Jing Gong* enhances the *Standing Like a Tree* form
- ☯ Becoming both physically and mentally relaxed is essential for *Standing Like a Tree* practice
- ☯ Each part of the body must be “put to relax” (*Fang Song*) to become deeply tranquil
- ☯ *Jing Gong* breathing techniques help to achieve maximum relaxation
- ☯ Becoming deeply relaxed opens the *channels* and Qi flow, and it allows for greater concentration

CHAPTER FOUR

Standing Like a Tree Part I



Drawing Heaven & Earth Qi

After learning the proper body alignment techniques and understanding how to deeply relax the body, regulate the breath, and concentrate at *Xia Dantien*, we can begin examining the basics of our *Standing Like a Tree* practice. Many of these skills that we learned in *Jing Gong* will also apply to our *Standing Like a Tree* form.

As in *Jing Gong* practice, we also use breath and concentration together when performing *Standing Like a Tree*. Our practice uses breath to guide the Qi in and out of the body through a specific technique involving concentration and awareness. This unique practice will train us in drawing Qi, moving Qi, and in developing a powerful flow of Qi. Before we learn this special *Standing Like a Tree* breathing technique, we must first understand how to mentally gather and guide Qi throughout the body.

Directing the Mind & Breath

Our *Standing Like a Tree* practice involves drawing Qi through the head and feet and expelling it out the hands and fingers (*Ground & Sky into One Breathing* technique). To accomplish this, we use our mind and breath as a tool to direct Qi in and out of the body. When inhaling, we utilize the incoming breath to draw Qi into key *energy gates* of the body. The exhale is then utilized to direct Qi out of the body. The breath clearly does not enter through these key *energy gates* of the body, since it enters exclusively through the respiratory system. We then only imagine inhaling and exhaling through certain areas of the body. This generates Qi flow in the parts of the body where we concentrate the mind and breath together. Coupled with imagination, we also use *interoception* of the body so that actual physiological awareness occurs where the mind directs the flow of Qi. *Interoception* is how the brain interprets the internal state of the body.

In Qigong philosophy, it is taught that Qi can be directed by the mind and breath together. When we place awareness and breath into the body, we actually impact ourselves physiologically. *Medical Qigong* suggests that where Qi is guided through the body, blood and oxygen will also follow there. Consequently, directing the mind and breath through the body can positively impact our health and well-being.

There are physiological sensations that can be identified when Qi flow is occurring in the body. These sensations help us discover our awareness of Qi flow. Developing sensitivity through internal investigation will assist in learning to draw and guide Qi. It is important to disregard notions of how Qi sensations are *supposed* to feel as opposed to how they

actually feel. Once we discover awareness of Qi flow occurring within ourselves, our cellular memory can recall how to repeat this experience. As with most Qigong internal arts, repeated practice leads to increased awareness, provided we use the mind and breath together to lead the Qi. Pushing to perceive sensations and awareness can also have the opposite effect. We must deeply relax in order to allow internal sensitivity to arise.

In this breathing practice, we can feel the breath pulling in Qi as we inhale, and expelling Qi as we exhale. We call this an *inflow sensation* and an *outflow sensation* of Qi. After drawing in Qi, we can then use the mind and breath to guide the Qi through the body as prescribed in the *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* technique.

Ground & Sky into One Breathing

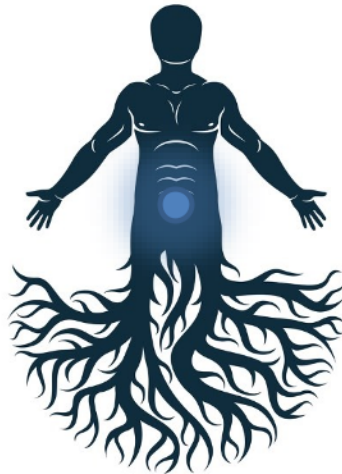
One of the most powerful types of breathing that we utilize in *Standing Like a Tree* is what we call *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*. *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* develops the ability to guide Qi throughout the entire body. This practice also develops the capacity for the practitioner to send Qi through their hands to heal others as well as themselves. Having the ability to move Qi through the body in *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* can bring a balance of Yin and Yang forces. This is because this method of breathing draws in *Earth Qi* (Ground/Yin) and *Heaven Qi* (Sky/Yang) simultaneously, creating a singularity of these two forces, which combines at the lower abdomen.

Drawing Qi from the Earth

Ground & Sky into One Breathing includes drawing in *Earth Qi*, or the Qi from the *energetic* field of the Earth, through

the feet. This literally occurs by focusing the mind to draw Qi from the ground, guided by the mind and breath.

We begin this method by placing our awareness approximately nine feet into the ground. Just as we learn to sense our hands and feet, we can also learn to sense beyond the body by mentally feeling nine feet below the ground. The analogy we use is that our feet and awareness enter the ground *like roots of a tree*. Then we concentrate on drawing *Earth Qi* into our feet from nine feet below us, using the tool of the incoming breath. From the feet, we continue to guide the *Earth Qi* upward with our mind and breath, drawing it through the legs and into the lower abdomen, or *Xia Dantien*.



Draw Earth Qi, Like Roots of a Tree

Drawing Qi from Heaven

While drawing *Earth Qi*, we simultaneously draw *Heaven Qi*, or Qi from the *energetic* field of the firmament, like the leaves of a tree receiving sunlight. This is done by

concentrating the mind to funnel in Qi from above us, drawing it downward through the head. We then continue to guide the *Heaven Qi* with our mind and *incoming* breath, drawing it down through the head and torso and into the lower abdomen, or *Xia Dantien*. In this way, we are drawing both *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi* into our lower abdomen simultaneously, from both ends of our body on the incoming breath.



Draw in Heaven Qi, Like Leaves Receiving Sunlight

Expelling the Gathered Qi

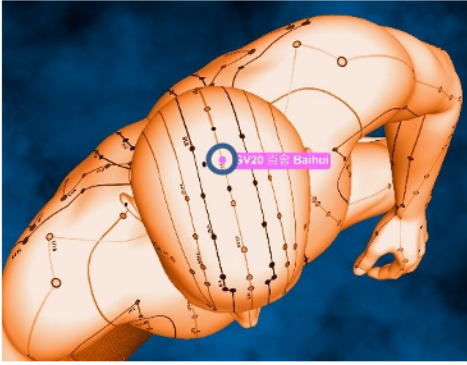
Next, as we exhale, we guide the *Heaven* and *Earth Qi* gathered at *Xia Dantien*, out through the arms, hands, and

fingers. This occurs with the arm and hands held apart on either side of the body (see arm & hand position descriptions). On the exhale, we can then experience energy moving out of the arms, hands, and fingers. In this way, we activate Qi flow through the arms and hands on the exhale, comparable to how we move Qi through the legs, torso, and head while we inhale. Thus, we basically move Qi throughout the entire body with the *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* practice.



Ground & Sky into One Breathing

Energy Gate at the Head – Bai Hui



When drawing *Heaven Qi* through the head in *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*, we are particularly connecting with an *energy gate* called the *Bai Hui*. The *Bai Hui* is located at the top of the head, and it is situated in the center, slightly to the rear of the skull. If a line is drawn straight upward from the highest point on each ear, it will meet at the *Bai Hui energy gate*. It is not necessary to pinpoint our focus on the *Bai Hui* acupuncture point in *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*. Rather, we can simply be aware of the *Bai Hui* area and allow our awareness of this *energy gate* to reveal itself. Later, we may discover a clearer sensation of the *Bai Hui energy gate* after focusing on drawing Qi through the general location.

Energy Gates of the Feet – Yongquan



In *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*, we are also drawing in *Qi* through the feet, particularly from the *Yongquan* or *Bubbling Springs* points. In the center depression of the ball of each foot, we can locate the *Yongquan* points. They represent the beginning acupuncture points of the Kidney meridians. *Earth Qi* is thus drawn in through the *Yongquan* energy gates in *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*.

As with the *Bai Hui*, we need not apply excessive concentration to these points; instead, we allow awareness of these *energy gates* to unfold. We can then discover a sensation of the *Yongquan* points as we draw *Qi* through that general area located on our feet.

Ground & Sky into One Breathing Training

Prior to beginning this standing form, we suggest spending some time practicing *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*. This can be done for a few minutes a day, while standing or sitting erect in a chair. Then when we begin the *Standing Like a Tree* practice, we will not excessively think about how to perform this breathing technique. Excessively thinking about the details and exactitude of a practice is one of the pitfalls that can hinder progress, as it takes one away from being mentally relaxed.

Eventually, *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* will become second nature. By repeated practice of this breathing technique, we also develop the natural ability to draw, gather, and move *Qi*.

Guidelines for Ground & Sky into One Breathing

When performing *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*, we must understand how to use mental abilities for guiding *Qi*.

Therefore, we will share four excellent guidelines to keep in mind while directing Qi through the body. Applying the following four rules will improve our ability to gather and move Qi. These guidelines are as follows:

1. The Mind Leads the Qi, and the Qi Follows the Mind
2. Catch the Feeling of Qi
3. Do Not Be in Pursuit of Qi
4. Do Not Rely on Imagination Alone

1. The Mind Leads the Qi, and the Qi Follows the Mind

When practicing *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*, we remember a key Qigong concept; *the mind leads the Qi, and the Qi follows the mind*. Where we place our mental intent, Qi will travel there. We use the mind to create a pathway which the Qi can follow along. It is like drawing a line in the sand, which guides water to flow from a puddle.

When we guide Qi with our mind, our mental focus remains just ahead of the Qi flow. Even if the mind leads only a fraction of second before the Qi, it is sufficient. The mind and Qi therefore are not concentrated together in one place. The mind must lead just ahead of the Qi to keep it flowing freely. To do this, we must feel a physiological pathway for the Qi to flow along.

2. Catch the Feeling of Qi

During *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*, we must also *catch the feeling of the Qi*, using our own discovery of the Qi and Qi flow. We all have our own internal body language, and we must discover how to become aware of energy flow in our own particular way. Concepts and teachings about how

to perceive Qi will not necessarily correspond to the way that we actually experience Qi.

The idea of *interoception* means that we sense what is occurring internally in our body. Our own internal research is then the best way to *catch the feeling of the Qi*. We can abandon concepts of how we think Qi is supposed to feel and discover how it actually feels when it is flowing within us.

3. Do not be in Pursuit of the Qi

Being *in pursuit of the Qi* means that we are trying to coerce the flow of Qi. Again, this may arise from how we perceive Qi flow should feel. Although we lead the Qi with our mind, we must still allow the Qi to follow, without mentally pulling the Qi forcibly. If we refine our *interoception* abilities, we learn that gathering and moving Qi is an art that requires internal awareness and sensitivity.

4. Do Not Rely on Imagination Alone

When we practice *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*, it is important that we perceive Qi not only in imagination, but within the body as well. We thus join the body and mind together to discover the Qi. Imagination alone is basically a mental image without actual sensation of the body combined with it. There are physiological sensations that occur during Qi flow, and we can use these to identify energy moving when focusing on a given area of the body. Bodily sensations can be subtle, and the Qigong practitioner can tune their awareness to identify how and when Qi flow is occurring, without just imagining it. Then we develop a memory pathway which is identifiable and can be recalled for creating Qi flow, beyond perceiving it through imagination alone.

Standing Like a Tree Hand Positions

When performing *Standing Like a Tree*, we can choose different hand positions for varied effects. The fingers and hands are used as sensitive instruments for Qi flow. Changing the fingers and angles of the hands can cause profound changes to the practice.

It is interesting to note that in *Standing Like a Tree* practice, we guide Qi out the fingers and palms. On the palms there are powerful *energy gates* called *Laogong*, or *Buddha Palm* points. From these *energy gates*, Qi can be drawn in, or projected out. Consequently, *Standing Like a Tree* practice also activates the *Laogong* points.



We can locate the Laogong points on the palms by bending the middle finger over the center of the palm

Curved Hands Position

Since the hands are transmitters of Qi, they can be used to direct Qi toward the body. Some forms of *Standing Like a Tree* have the palms and fingers curved toward the body, as if holding a ball at the abdomen. We call this *Curved Hands* position.

The *Curved Hands* position is a *Closed Energy Form*. This means that the Qi is projected and circulated inward toward the body. As we direct Qi out through the hands on the exhale, it returns to the body in the *Curved Hands* position of *Standing Like a Tree*. In this form, we are usually directing the Qi straight into the lower abdomen. Alternative positions for this form can include holding the *Curved Hands* at the level of the chest or forehead.



Curved Hands
Closed Energy Form

Sword Fingers Position

The *Sword Fingers* position is done by pointing the index and middle fingers straight forward together, while bending the ring and little fingers, with the thumbs placed over them. We then hold the *Sword Fingers* pointing forward with the forearms held at a level height, about 1 ½ feet apart. As we exhale in *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*, the Qi then leaves the *Sword Fingers* as if the fingers are shooting Qi straight out. Simultaneously, we maintain sensitivity of the *Sword Fingers* on both hands.

The two *Sword Fingers* (index & middle fingers) are held together, impacting different *channels* of energy. The

little and ring fingers folded under the thumb also stimulate other *meridians* corresponding to these fingers. Performing *Sword Fingers* is said to specifically pull and activate the heart meridian. It is taught that people with heart trouble can move their little finger to activate the heart meridian for health. Therefore, holding the fingers in this way suggests that this hand position was designed to positively affect our health and consciousness.

Applying *Sword Fingers* also activates other *meridians*, and it can be painful for some practitioners if they have energy blockages in their *channels*. With regular practice, such pain can lessen, and blockages can be cleared. *Sword Fingers* is thus a key hand position for opening the *channels*. We therefore recommend applying the *Sword Fingers* hand position in *Standing Like a Tree* practice.

Sword Fingers is considered an advanced form of *Standing Like a Tree*. An advanced form means that it is a practice in which rapid transformation can occur; however, it can also be physically or mentally challenging. On the surface, the *Sword Fingers* technique may seem to cause a loss of Qi when it leaves the body through the two fingers of each hand. Based on this, one may conclude that the *Closed Energy Form* is a superior practice. However, the *Sword Fingers* form actually draws in Qi and expels it, keeping a continuous flow of Qi through the body. This creates a vacuum, generating an infinite flow of Qi. In a sense, the *Sword Fingers* combined with *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* helps us to become a channel for Qi by developing an automatic flow of energy. Thus, in this practice, we do not lose Qi by

expelling it out of the body, since we are continually taking it in through the ground and sky. It is a noteworthy point that drawing and then expelling Qi out of the body is a healthy and cleansing practice from a *Medical Qigong* perspective. This is because Qi is constantly moving in this technique, and movement is life.



Sword Fingers
Suggested Position

Flat Hands Position

The *Flat Hands* position is another hand technique comparable to *Sword Fingers*. It is achieved by holding all the fingers straight out with the palms facing each other, about 1 ½ feet apart. The Qi is then directed out the fingers in the *Flat Hands* position, the same way it is done with *Sword Fingers*. This can be done as an alternative to *Sword Fingers* if one is seeking a less intensive method. Sometimes it is better to do a practice that helps create a flow of Qi in an

easier way, and then later progress to a more advanced form. Either way, the end results can be the same.



Flat Hands

Alternative Suggested Position

Index Finger Under Thumb Position

Another less intensive alternative to the *Sword Fingers* position is the *Index Finger Under Thumb* position. The *Index Finger Under Thumb* position is accomplished by bending the tip of the index finger under thumb tip while the other fingers remain straight forward. This hand position is comparable to what is known in the Yogic tradition as *Gyan Mudra* (wisdom hand position), except that the tip of the index finger curls under the thumb. From a Qigong perspective, we can surmise that the *Index Finger Under Thumb* position stimulates certain *meridians* based on the pull of these two fingers. Stimulating *meridians* has

extensive effects on our consciousness in addition to creating benefits for our health.

Note: Similar to the *Flat Hands* position, the palms face each other and remain about 1 ½ feet apart in the *Index Finger Under Thumb* position. Also, all alternative positions include the *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* technique.



Index Finger Under Thumb

Standing Like a Tree Arm Positions



Lower

Middle

Upper

Elbows are Never Fully Locked

In *Standing Like a Tree* practice, the forearms are typically held about waist level, about 1 ½ feet apart, slightly away from either side of the torso. A more advanced form of *Standing Like a Tree* can also be done with the arms held straight at chest level, or upward at a sixty-degree angle, while using the suggested hand positions. We recommend starting with the forearms held at the lower position (see above). As we progress, we may choose to practice *Standing Like a Tree* with the arms raised in the more advanced positions. We may start by adding the higher arm positions for only a few minutes at the end of practice, and then progress to longer periods of time.

Horse Stance Posture

The basic posture in *Standing Like a Tree* is called *Horse Stance*, also known as *Ma Bu*. *Horse Stance* is performed by standing with the feet *at least* slightly wider than shoulder width apart, while gently bending the knees (not beyond the toes). As we gain strength in *Horse Stance* practice, we can stand wider apart, provided that we can maintain physical and mental relaxation in the broader stance. A wider stance will equate with building more strength; however, if we excessively tighten the muscles in doing so, it can be detrimental.



Horse Stance

Once in *Horse Stance*, we place sixty percent of the weight on the heels with the toes gripping the ground. As per the body alignment techniques, we keep the feet parallel and shift the hips forward while in this posture. When in *Horse Stance*, we can try to discover the feeling as if we are sitting on our legs. This comfortable position occurs when we thrust the buttocks and hips forward while rounding the back, so that our weight stacks firmly on the feet and legs (see Chapter

Two: Body Alignment). Also, we must remember to keep the body and weight evenly balanced in this position. We need to maintain proper alignment while being relaxed and comfortable in this stance.

The Purpose of Horse Stance

We might ask ourselves why *Horse Stance* is considered so vital in Qigong for health, healing, and building strength. Our theory is that *Horse Stance* draws negative ions into the body that produce healthy effects. Negative ions arise from the earth, and they can move into the feet and legs from the ground. Studies suggest that these ions passing through the earth and into the body promote numerous health benefits.

Further, it is suggested that quartz crystals have what is called a “piezoelectric effect”, which attracts negative ions. Like quartz crystals, the bones are also piezoelectric. According to studies, bones exhibit piezoelectric properties when stress is applied to them. This means that bones produce a current when they are strained. *Horse Stance* produces stress to the bones in the feet, legs, and pelvis. We therefore conclude that the *Horse Stance* posture generates a piezoelectric effect, which could cause negative ions to be drawn into the body, thereby positively impacting our health and well-being. Even though negative ions may not pass through certain surfaces to the best of our understanding, still, Qi penetrates all matter.

Hence, we surmise that the piezoelectric current which *Horse Stance* generates activates Qi flow, comparable to how it may potentially activate the flow of negative ions.

Straight Standing Form



Some practitioners who wish to learn *Standing Like a Tree* may not yet have the strength to sustain this form. For those who are not able to maintain a *Horse Stance* and/or the arm and hand positions, there is an alternative practice that can bring about positive results that we call *Straight Standing Form*. With *Straight Standing Form*, the practitioner can simply stand with their legs straight and arms at their sides. In this form, the knees and elbows must not be locked, maintaining the slightest bend so that we follow the *five bows* (Chapter Two: Body Alignment) principle. If we apply the *five bows*, the arms also bow outward so that they are slightly away from the body. Finally, we keep the palms and fingers relaxed and slightly curved, facing the sides of the body.

The *Straight Standing Form* may also be done while holding the arm and hand positions. Alternatively, a practitioner may choose to raise their arms as they progress. Also, the legs can slowly be set further apart as one's capability increases. This can be performed in short intervals while one builds their strength and Qi.

- ☯ *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* opens the energy gates and *channels*, bringing Yin Yang balance
- ☯ Lead the Qi with the mind and the Qi will follow
- ☯ Discover the Qi naturally with both mind and body, without coercing its flow
- ☯ *Horse Stance with Sword Fingers* is considered our most powerful form of *Standing Like a Tree*

CHAPTER FIVE

Standing Like a Tree Part II



In Part II of *Standing Like a Tree*, we will explore more details about this form, including key techniques to enhance our practice. Also, we will narrate special practice conditions and parameters for our standing form. In the final information of this chapter, we will include step-by-step instructions for our *Standing Like a Tree* method. After we clearly understand every aspect of this form, we can then begin our practice.

Remaining Relaxed

A key to gaining strength and having health benefits in *Standing Like a Tree* occurs through keeping the body relaxed. Physical tension in this practice can potentially cause adverse effects. If we are not relaxed during *Standing Like a Tree*, we are doing the practice incorrectly. In order to remain relaxed, one must keep a comfortable stance and periodically release any tension that arises in the body. We are to remain loose and limber, while maintaining the proper posture. To assist with this, we can apply the four techniques of consciously relaxing the forehead and brow, smiling naturally, relaxing the shoulders, and keeping the abdomen and waist relaxed. If the abdomen is not deeply relaxed, the Qi will not connect at *Xia Dantien* when we are gathering from *Ground* and *Sky*. Thus, if the abdomen is relaxed, the *Earth Qi* and *Heaven Qi* drawn together can combine at the lower abdomen in the *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*.

In addition to the four methods of relaxing the body, we can regularly scan the body to check for tension held during *Standing Like a Tree* practice. Tension typically occurs in the abdomen, shoulders, or thighs. When we discover tension, we are to consciously release it. Tension detected in the body can be released through the command of the mind, much like the *Fang Song* body relaxation practice in *Jing Gong*. Thus, *Jing Gong* is an excellent training for developing the ability to relax at will. One concept to remember is that our state of mind can automatically initiate the nervous system, head, limbs, and torso to relax. Therefore, a pleasant state of mind greatly impacts our physicality.

“Relaxed and unwound, yet acutely sensitive”

Guanzi text

Standing Like a Tree Practice Conditions

People may be concerned as to whether *Standing Like a Tree* practice is beneficial to their health, especially if they have various medical conditions. Generally, when *Standing Like a Tree* is performed correctly, it will strengthen the whole body. As stated, people with health conditions who cannot maintain the *Standing Like a Tree Horse Stance* and/or hand positions, can perform the *Straight Standing Form*. However, if one is experiencing sweating, shaking, minor fatigue, or tolerable pain in *Standing Like a Tree* practice, it is not a reason to discontinue or simplify it. When the body is having such reactions during standing practice, it only means that the change in Qi flow is causing physiological adjustments. Thus, if *channels* with Qi flow blockages begin to open during standing practice, physically uncomfortable feelings can arise.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, a smooth flow of Qi through the *meridians* is the key to good health and well-being. Opening the *channels* therefore brings about a change for the better, and while accomplishing this, there may be some physical discomfort. Since *Standing Like a Tree* practice is one of the most powerful forms, one might expect physiological changes that may be uncomfortable, yet bearable.

Illness During Practice

Practice of *Standing Like a Tree* can help strengthen the body and Qi flow, even if we are slightly ill, or if we feel an onset of a cold. In such cases, *Standing Like a Tree* can actually help to heal a cold. However, if we are feeling very ill, we should not practice *Standing Like a Tree*.

Dizziness or Fatigue During Practice

If one becomes extremely dizzy, or begins to lose their balance during practice, we suggest that they immediately open their eyes. If dizziness continues, a person can change their posture so that they are standing normally. If there is severe dizziness, one must promptly sit down in a chair. If a person is prone to becoming lightheaded, or if they are concerned about fainting during practice, we suggest that they have a chair behind them, so that they can easily sit down if necessary. This also applies if someone becomes overly fatigued during the practice.

Pain During Practice

If one experiences very uncomfortable pain in *Standing Like a Tree*, it might help to slightly adjust the posture to a more relaxed stance. For example, if a *Horse Stance* is too wide, it may cause discomfort and distract from concentration. In this case, one can simply make micro-adjustments to decrease the width of the *Horse Stance*. Nevertheless, it is best to avoid abrupt adjustments or movements during practice, keeping the posture, arms, hands, and fingers as still as possible.

To avoid having to make micro-adjustments, the practitioner needs to discern the depth of practice they feel is best for them. If one becomes overly ambitious, it can stress the body, causing adverse effects. Typically, when beginning, some pain and trembling occur. Therefore, it is best to find the balance of making a concerted effort without severely straining the body in *Standing Like a Tree* practice.

Even if one is very muscular and strong, there may still be difficulty and/or pain while holding the posture of this form. This is because standing practice is also based on other facets of strength, such as a strong nervous system and a healthy

flow of Qi. Difficulty in practice can therefore indicate that there are internal weaknesses, which may not be outwardly visible. As *Standing Like a Tree* practice progresses, typically internal weaknesses correct themselves, which in turn causes pain to dissipate. Therefore, if we work through minor pain during practice, it will eventually open the *channels* and improve our health.

Menstruation During Practice

If there is any difficulty or pain during a menstrual cycle, it is best to promptly discontinue *Standing Like a Tree*. Straining the body with practice during a heavy menstrual cycle may cause more problems rather than benefits.

Emotional State During Practice

If there is extreme emotional disturbance, it is best not to perform *Standing Like a Tree* at that time. If the emotional state distracts from concentration, one may not have the capacity to consciously relax the body and focus the mind, or even the ability to apply breathing techniques. If experiencing only minor stress or challenges occurring in day-to-day life, we can still perform the practice. The feeling of not wanting to do practice may also arise on a regular basis. In this case, we want to be conscious not to dismiss *Standing Like a Tree* due to this type of emotional feeling.

Environment During Practice

It is ideal to practice standing outdoors in a scenic area or in a quiet and clean room. A peaceful and relaxed setting will encourage one to relax, and it will help create a positive state of mind. It is best to avoid practicing in environments that are emotionally toxic or very crowded and busy. If

performing *Standing Like a Tree* outdoors, it is important to avoid overly hot, cold, or inclement weather conditions.

Standing Like a Tree Practice Time

It is especially important to proceed slowly when beginning to learn *Standing Like a Tree*. It is best to start with five minutes a day and build up to ten minutes after about a week. Then one can gradually increase the time to twenty minutes over one month. From there, we can gauge our strength, and build-up to twenty-five or even thirty minutes. If one proceeds too quickly, their nerves and muscles may not have sufficient strength to perform the practice, causing tension and stress. How one progresses with *Standing Like a Tree* must then be based on how relaxed and at ease one is during practice.

Ultimately, if we practice *Standing Like a Tree* daily, for a longer duration of time, we will receive greater results in terms of health and well-being, provided that we correctly perform the practice. Thus, to experience increased benefits from *Standing Like a Tree*, we can potentially build our practice time up to twenty-five or thirty minutes daily. That said, we do not practice this form longer than thirty to thirty-five minutes, because after that point it begins to overly stress the body. Such excessive practice may cause adverse effects.

Another point is that of daily consistency. It is optimal to maintain a regular practice every day of the week, or at least five days per week, with exceptions due to extenuating circumstances. It is most effective to perform *Standing Like a Tree* in the early morning or before bed. If practicing this form before bed, it can help us to sleep better. However, if done during later hours of the evening, it is possible that

increased energy will keep a person awake. If this occurs, the *Jing Gong* meditation can follow *Standing Like a Tree* practice to help calm and relax the body.

Standing Like a Tree Progression

As one progressively becomes stronger in their practice, higher arm positions can be applied if desired (Chapter Four: Standing Like a Tree Arm Positions). The higher arm positions will bring greater benefit if one is ready to practice them. Additionally, horse stance can gradually be widened to further build strength and endurance.

Before advancing, it's best to first allow the *channels* to open and the nervous system to strengthen. Also, it is important to feel a connection with the *Qi field* through the hands, head, and feet combining into the body. Finally, developing mind power is necessary to consciously gather and move Qi at will.

Within three years of concerted practice, it is said that many sicknesses will leave, and healing capabilities will increase. Furthermore, one's ability with Qi will vastly improve. For these reasons and more, *Standing Like a Tree* is considered a foundation of Qigong practice.

Standing Like a Tree - Step by Step Instructions

1. **Horse Stance:** Begin by placing both feet parallel and at least slightly wider than the shoulders, with the knees gently bent, not beyond the toes. The feet remain parallel to avoid stress on the knees. Ensure that the body and legs are relaxed and comfortable. Then gently thrust the hips forward and properly align

the body posture as per instructions detailed in Chapter Two.

2. **Shift the Weight / Grip the Toes:** Next, shift the weight primarily to the heels (about 60% of the weight on the heels), and allow the toes to lightly grip the ground. Holding the feet in this way will help maintain balance and connection with the earth.
3. **Feet Root into the Ground:** Sense both feet entering approximately nine feet into the ground, like roots of a tree. The feet being like tree roots means that we feel the feet reaching beyond the body, into the earth.
4. **Raise the Arms with Sword Fingers:** Raise both forearms to a parallel height with both hands in the *Sword Fingers* position. Allow the arms to rise shoulder width apart, as if they are floating up in a relaxed manner. Then repeat this again two more times, by lowering and the arms to the sides and gently raising them again into the same position. Each time you raise the arms, consciously relax them as they gently move into the posture. This will help to relax the arms and fingers, so Qi flow can increase. Note: Alternatively, you may put the hands into a *Flat Palm* or *Index Finger Under Thumb* position.
5. **Relax Forehead & Eyebrows and Smile:** Release any tension or expression on the forehead, being conscious not to furrow or raise the brow; “*Smooth out the Forehead.*” Then allow a natural smile to

arise on the face to evoke a relaxed and calm disposition.

6. **Draw Attention Away from Distant Sounds:** This means that you focus on your own internal self instead of the sounds around you. The mind is basically tuned inward, instead of focused on external stimuli.
7. **Touch the Tongue to the Upper Palate:** Your tongue is then placed so it touches the upper palate to connect the *Du Mai* and *Ren Mai meridians*, facilitating Qi circulation.
8. **Swallowing Saliva:** If the mouth is watering, swallow the saliva during *Standing Like a Tree Practice*. The water on the tongue is considered *life energy*, so you swallow it in Qigong practice. In oriental medicine, producing and swallowing saliva is important in keeping a healthy mind and body. In the *Huangdi Neijing*, or the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Scripture*, it says the saliva is our spiritual fluid. This implies that there is a relationship between our mind/brain function and saliva. To have longevity, you swallow your saliva rather than spitting it out, which will keep the mind clear and the skin youthful.
9. **Keep the Eyes Level and Slightly Open:** Look straight ahead at a level height, while closing the eyes nine tenths of the way (Do not roll the eyes upward). This improves concentration, and the specific angle of the eyes stimulates brain secretions that enhance meditation. Also, maintaining the proper eye position

greatly impacts your level of internal relaxation during practice.

10. **Breathe Through the Nose:** During practice, breathe through the nose. Breathing through the nose will allow for greater concentration. Also, it will assist with performing the *six breath regulations*.

11. **Ground & Sky Breathing Inhale:** After the body has been adjusted, begin *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*. Draw Qi from the *Earth*, or *Ground*, up through the feet. Then, draw Qi from *Heaven*, or *Sky*, down through the head. The *Heaven Qi* and *Earth Qi* meet together in the lower abdomen, or *Xia Dantien*.

12. **Ground & Sky Breathing Exhale:** As you exhale, think of the two arms and *Sword Fingers* as a pathway for the Qi flow. The Qi therefore leaves the body through the *Sword Fingers* as you breathe out. Specifically, maintain awareness of the hands and fingers as the Qi leaves them. You may sense the Qi flowing out beyond the two *Sword Fingers*, as if the fingers extend in length, like a sword.

13. **Scan the Body for Tension:** Regularly scan your body using your internal awareness, checking for any tension held. Especially check for tightness in the shoulders, abdomen, waist, and thighs. Consciously release and relax even the slightest micro-tensions, and ensure that your muscles are not locked.

14. **Perform Closing Form:** After completing *Standing Like a Tree* practice, gently come out of the posture and stand straight for a moment, holding your

palms over *Xia Dantien*. After about 30 seconds, perform the *Closing Form* techniques (See Chapter Three: Closing Form).

Practice Tips & Reminders:

- ✓ As much as possible, remain still to allow internal changes to occur.
- ✓ Keep the fingers straight and steady, with the mind present in the fingers while the Qi goes out of them.
- ✓ Any sensation you have during *Standing Like a Tree* practice is a good sign, meaning it indicates Qi is flowing.
- ✓ In the beginning, you may actually have more sensations of Qi flow. This simply means that the Qi had been stagnant, and it is now starting to flow.
- ✓ Remain relaxed, so that tension does not block Qi flow.
- ✓ If you can tolerate minor pain during *Standing Like a Tree*, keep going. When experiencing pain, it often means that you are not relaxed enough in your posture.
- ✓ Spend preparation time so that the body is relaxed during *Standing Like a Tree*. It is best not to jump directly into practice. First, go into a calm and meditative frame of mind. Spend two to five minutes clearing the mind to become relaxed.

- ✓ Remember to practice *Jing Gong* if you wish to reach deeper levels of relaxation. *Jing Gong* will also heal and energize the body, and you may find that you need less sleep.
- ✓ Ensure that you are not leaning forward or backward, and that your head is kept upright during standing practice.
- ✓ Shaking may occur during standing practice. Eventually it will cease, as the body increases its energy level and strength from repeated practice. If you experience shaking or sweating during *Standing Like a Tree*, it means the body is opening its *channels*. Therefore, do not be alarmed.
- ✓ Maintain concentration of the *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* continuously. This enables Qi to move in and out of the body during practice, constantly circulating while opening the *channels*.

Additional Standing Like a Tree Techniques

1. Add the Six Breath Regulations

It is important to utilize the *Six Breath Regulations* when performing the *Ground and Sky into One Breathing*. As previously discussed, the *Six Breath Regulations* will assist to gather and direct Qi throughout the body.

2. Add Reverse Abdominal Breathing

When doing *Standing Like a Tree*, it is ideally performed along with *Reverse Abdominal Breathing*. As you become familiar with *Standing Like a Tree* practice, you can combine

the techniques of *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* with *Ground and Sky into One Breathing*. When the abdomen draws inward on the inhale, you can draw the *Ground* and *Sky* energies to combine at *Xia Dantien*. As you exhale and the abdomen gently pushes out, you can feel the Qi moving out the arms and *Sword Fingers*. In this method, the *Reverse Abdominal Breathing* can act as a pump for drawing in Qi and expelling Qi.

3. Commit to One Style of Standing Like a Tree

Many Qigong systems suggest that you train with only one specific standing form at a time. Otherwise, you could have *Qi Confusion*, which in this case means that you are adversely mixing different pathways of Qi flow. If differing practices blend Qi flow in an uncomplimentary manner, it may cause harm to the practitioner. By following this suggestion, one can safely experience the benefits and mastery of this extraordinary, and specialized technique of *Standing Like a Tree*. Afterwards, you may choose to perform another style of standing form, and at that time, discontinue practice of our *Standing Like a Tree* technique.

- ☯ Remaining relaxed and without tension in *Standing Like a Tree* is a key to a successful practice
- ☯ Shaking and minor pain in *Standing Like a Tree* is ok because the body is strengthening
- ☯ Follow the guidelines and tips for a safe and successful *Standing Like a Tree* practice
- ☯ You may slowly increase the *Standing Like a Tree* practice time to gain enhanced benefits

CHAPTER SIX

Practical Philosophy for Standing Practice



Qigong Wisdom to Enhance Practice

Based on some concepts from the eBook, *Practical Qigong Philosophies*, by Master Tianyou Hao, we will provide the reader with a few pearls of wisdom that can enhance the *Standing Like a Tree* practice and quality of life in general. Applying this Qigong wisdom to the *Standing Like a Tree* form will, in fact, impact our health and Qi flow. Therefore, we interweave Qigong philosophy with Qigong practice, for the benefit of the *Standing Like a Tree* practitioner.

All-Day Qigong



Outside of Qigong practice, we want to keep the Qi flowing smoothly in the body throughout the day. We call this *All-Day Qigong*. As discussed, a smooth flow of Qi is the key to good health and well-being. Tension and destructive emotions can block Qi flow and cause physical and mental issues. Since a key aspect of Qigong is remaining mentally and physically relaxed, we want to sustain this composure throughout the day, to the best of our ability. We cannot pretend to be free of negative emotions, as circumstance will inevitably trigger us on some level. However, we can train ourselves to quickly adjust the mind and body to return to a relatively relaxed state whenever challenging circumstances occur. According to Master Hao, Qigong mastery includes the ability to rapidly relieve one's internal disturbance, by promptly adjusting the body and mind to relax. For this to occur, internal command of the body and mind is required. We can learn to become acutely aware of how the body is reacting and consciously calm it down. This is done by examining physical and/or emotional stress occurring in the body and mind, and then adjusting the internal turmoil (without suppressing emotions). We can discover and remember what a tranquil state of being feels like physiologically, and then return to that state. For this reason, *Jing Gong* practice becomes so important, because we train

ourselves to be consciously relaxed, so that we can recall this calm state of being throughout the day.

Another *All-Day-Qigong* practice is automatic awareness of the *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* method. When performing *Standing Like a Tree*, we do this breathing technique. However, *Ground & Sky into One Breathing* can also be done at any time throughout the day. We can practice drawing Qi from *Ground & Sky* many times throughout the day. Eventually, gathering and moving Qi can become so automatic, that we no longer need to *regulate* the Qi flow. *Regulating* Qi means that we consciously guide and move the Qi. Automatically performing internal Qigong practices means that we have developed the ability to do what is called *regulate without regulating*. To continuously *regulate without regulating* can be considered the same as *All-Day-Qigong*.

Through consistent *Standing Like a Tree* practice and by remaining relaxed throughout the day, the *channels* will open, and Qi will flow abundantly. Then one will discover *All-Day-Qigong* automatically occurring in every aspect of life.

Abandoning Achievement



Although it is important to remain conscious of the results that we are seeking in *Standing Like a Tree*, it is not necessary to continually focus on an objective we desire to reach. If we are concentrating on our goal, we are not present with our practice. Creating goals can be effective, provided we abandon a compulsive approach toward our practices. Sometimes one develops habits of doing a Qigong form only for the purpose of completing it.

During practice, we may anticipate its completion, forgetting to be present in the practice and going through the motions for the sake of accomplishment alone. Thus, abandoning achievement means we perform *Standing Like a Tree* without expectations or goals, so that we can remain attentive and relaxed.

Discover Your Own Way



If we follow a proficient Qigong teacher and emulate their ways, it is good, but eventually we need to discover the Qi flow in *our own way*. There may be a tendency to perceive *Standing Like a Tree* based on our interpretation of the way it was taught. However, the way we discover Qi will be unique to ourselves. We may have a sophisticated concept of how Qi flow occurs, yet this may not necessarily translate into our actual experience of Qi flow. As discussed, we need

to catch the feeling of the Qi in *our own way* to experience Qi flow.

Abandon Comparison and Judgement

One factor that detracts from a successful *Standing Like a Tree* practice is comparing our capability to another, including comparing ourselves to a standard that we feel we must meet. This interweaves external beliefs into the Qigong form(s), which impacts our efforts. One's mindset can powerfully influence awareness and Qi flow. During *Standing Like a Tree* practice, we can easily judge the quality of our skill or even over-evaluate our expertise. We may become overly occupied with categorizing our proficiency in comparison to others. We may applaud or condemn our practice, which draws the mind away from being present and aware. Therefore, we can let ourselves be and allow the *Standing Like a Tree* practice to naturally evolve.

Consistency of Practice

Regular practice of *Standing Like a Tree* will certainly bring greater results. If we experience a wonderful flow of Qi on one occasion, it does not mean we stop practicing. It indicates the *channels* are opening, and it is best to nurture this experience further. The *channels* require regular clearing, and daily *Standing Like a Tree* will accomplish this. We suggest practicing five to seven day per week, under normal practice conditions. To experience significant improvements to our health, and to develop a powerful flow of Qi, it is best to regularly perform *Standing Like a Tree* for a period of three years or more. This may sound like a long time; however, the benefits from this form will be well worth the effort. In addition, practicing *Standing Like a Tree* for twenty-five minutes per day, for three years, will greatly enhance Qi healing ability.

Approximate the Practice



When practicing *Standing Like a Tree*, we may feel a need to mentally push ourselves to reach what we perceive as perfection of the practice. In *Standing Like a Tree*, we need to be *where we are now* in terms of what we can actually do and perceive. Pushing to perceive awareness of Qi flow and perfection of the form will cause mental stress and negate the benefits of the training. It is therefore best to *approximate the practice* to the best of one's ability and understanding, while performing *Standing Like a Tree*. Approximating the practice simply means that we allow the practice to be what we can naturally sense and physically perform. For example, when we begin *Ground & Sky into One Breathing*, we may only have some awareness of the bottom of the feet and the top of the head, when drawing in Qi. We may not sense an elaborate flow of Qi moving through the entire body. In this case, we approximate the practice to best of our intention, and over time, the practice will further improve itself. Approximation of practice will relieve excessive tension that is created from attempting to perfectly perform *Standing Like a Tree*. Then, as we progress, we can discover more subtleties of the practice and develop more expertise with the physical form. This is the way to progressively advance in *Standing Like a Tree* practice.

The Practice of Forgetting



Preventing the mind from wandering into many directions is what we call *forgetting*. During *Standing Like a Tree* practice, it is important not to be distracted by the many thoughts of the day. Concentration on Qi flow is affected when the mind is preoccupied with daily concerns. If the mind starts to wander, we can gently bring it back by temporarily *forgetting* the mental engagements of the day.

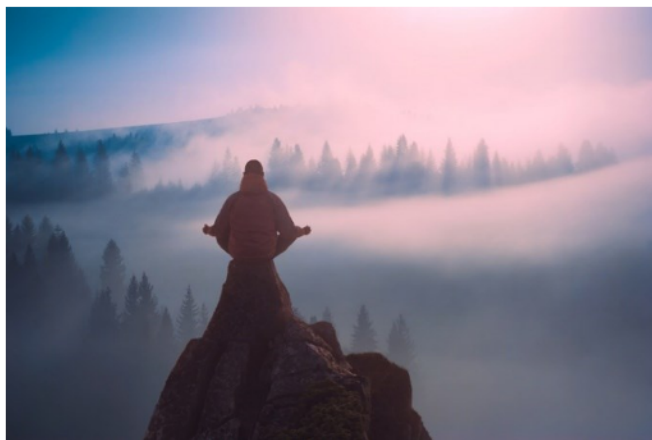
Forgetting also includes relinquishing the *inner narrator*, which is a dialogue in the mind that constantly narrates the details of our practice. The *inner narrator* may also label our progress, monitor the time, or even begin an internal lecture, all while one is practicing *Standing Like a Tree*.

To abandon this internal dialogue, become like an *empty vessel*. When we are full of ideas about everything, the *vessel*, or ourselves, cannot fill with Qi. What goes on in the mind and heart has significant impact on Qi flow. Thus, forgetting is a way to excel in *Standing Like a Tree* practice.

Thoughtlessness

As we master *forgetting*, we learn the ability to become *thoughtless*. Here, the mind is relatively empty of thoughts and concentrated on the practice without “thinking” about the practice. To truly reach a place of *thoughtlessness*, we first need to become ultra-tranquil, with our *channels* open. For this reason, practicing *Jing Gong* is helpful for the body and mind to become calm and peaceful. Consequently, relaxing the body and regulating the breath, train us to go into *thoughtlessness*.

If we simply think, “become thoughtless”, we may end up thinking excessively about this perceived state, without actually being *thoughtless*. So, pursuing *thoughtlessness* in *Standing Like a Tree* is not the pathway. Rather *Forgetting*, along with deep internal quietude and *relaxed* concentration, is the initial step. Essentially, to progress slowly and steadily, is ironically the fastest path to mastery of *Standing Like a Tree* practice!



“*Practical Qigong Philosophy*” by Master Tianyou Hao,
may be found at:

<https://qihealingpower.com>

Conclusion



Our *Standing Like a Tree* form can develop health & Qi flow in a short period of time. This form can bring a high level of stamina and energy to the practitioner. When beginning *Standing Like a Tree*, one becomes aware of their actual level health. The bodily reactions that occur during practice will indicate the strength of one's internal health. Over time, the *channels* will open, generating health and well-being. *Standing Like a Tree* will then rapidly reduce the time to heal health issues, and it will likely bring about a new consciousness to the practitioner. Even within one or two days of practice, it is possible to see results.

We recommend dedicating a small window of time each day for *Standing Like a Tree* practice. We wish the reader the best for increased self-awareness and a greater quality of life!

*For further reading and understanding of Qigong,
we recommend our book, Qi & Body Awareness.*

Acknowledgments

*I would like to acknowledge Master Tianyou Hao,
who has shared practices and teachings
contained in this book.*

*This book is dedicated to my beautiful wife,
Hari Dharam Kaur Khalsa,
who has supported my efforts in Qigong practice and
who has assisted with the editing of this book.*

Glossary

Acupoints Acupuncture or acupressure points, energy gates.

Bai Hui The energy gate located at the rear upper crown (GV 20 acupuncture point).

Bubbling Springs The energy gates on the balls of the feet, also known as the Yongquan point.

Buddha Palm The energy gate on the center of the palms, also known as the Laogong point.

Channel(s) Meridians or vessels, pathways of Qi flow through the body.

Closed Energy Form Qigong standing form where the energy circulates back toward the body.

Closing Form A set of techniques used after Qigong meditation to stimulate the channels and acupoints.

Compacting Qi To mentally compress and move the Qi downward and/or inward.

Cultivation Developing awareness of and growth of Qi flow throughout our being.

Da Zhui The energy gate at the neckbone, corresponding to C-7 on the spine.

Dantien The Elixir Fields located within the body at the lower abdomen, chest, and forehead.

Di Qi The Qi field of the Earth, which is primarily Yin in quality.

Du Mai The meridian that extends from the upper lip, over the head, and down the spine to the perineum, also known as the Governing Vessel.

Earth Qi The Qi field of the Earth, also known as Di Qi.

Energetic (Metaphysical) An unmeasurable force, energy, effect, experience, or phenomenon that impacts a person, place, or thing.

Energy Gates Acupoints, acupressure points, acupuncture points, or the Dantiens.

Fang Song To put the body to relax.

First Adjustment To adjust the posture and the body to relax.

Five Bows A slight bend in the knees and elbows and a rounding of the back.

Frequency (Metaphysical) The *energetic* oscillation of a person, place, or thing which reflects one's 'state of mind', the *energetic* atmosphere, or an *energetic* field emitted.

Gathering Collecting Qi into the body.

Grounding Mentally sinking the feet to connect with the Earth Qi.

Heaven Qi The Qi field of the sky, firmament, sun, moon, heavens, etc., also known as Tien Qi.

Horse Stance Standing at least shoulder-width apart, with knees slightly bent and hips forward. Also known as Ma Bu.

Huangdi Neijing An ancient Chinese medical text (known in English as the Yellow Emperor's Inner Scripture), which is treated as a fundamental source for Chinese medicine.

Inflow Sensation Author's term for the sensation of Qi entering the body.

Internal Arts The practice of being aware of Qi and the internal self, also known as Neigong.

Interoception How the brain interprets the internal state of the body.

Jing Gong A meditation practice which uses breath regulation, body relaxation, and concentration. Also known as Quiet Form.

Laogong The energy gate on the center of the palm, also known as the Buddha Palm point.

Ma Bu Standing at least shoulder width apart, with knees slightly bent and hips forward. Also known as Horse Stance.

Medical Qigong The use of Qigong practices for overcoming or preventing health issues.

Meridians Pathways of Qi flow through the body channels.

Middle Dantien The energy gate located at the center of the chest, also known as Zhong Dantien.

Neigong The practice of being aware of the internal self, Qi, energy gates, meridians, etc.

Outflow Sensation Author's term for the sensation of the Qi flowing out of the body.

Qi Life force, a Universal Field of energy.

Qi Ball The field of Qi created between both palms, sometimes formed into a ball.

Qi Chen Xia Dantien Guiding the Qi down to the lower abdomen.

Qi Field The field of Qi all around us and in everything. Also, the Qi radiating from a given form of life or from matter in general.

Qi Confusion Qi flowing in an improper direction.

Qi Stagnation A lack of smooth Qi flow.

Qigong Cultivation of skill or ability with Qi.

Regulating without Regulating This is the point when gathering or moving Qi, or practicing Qigong, occurs automatically without specific concentration.

Ren Mai The meridian that extends from the lower lip to the perineum, also known as the Conception Vessel.

Reverse Cultivation Cultivating Qi and awareness of the physical body prior to cultivating awareness of the more ethereal.

Rooting The feet and body weight firmly planted into the ground.

Second Adjustment To regulate the breath to be soft and relaxed.

Six Breath Regulations Different ways to regulate the breath so that it becomes soft and smooth.

Standing Like a Tree A Qigong practice that involves standing still in a meditative manner, also known as Zhan Zhuang.

Sword Fingers Bending the thumb tip over the little and ring finger while pointing the index and middle finger straight forward.

Taiji or Tai Chi The Yin-Yang Symbol, or the martial arts practice of Tai Chi.

Taoism A Chinese philosophy based on the writings of Lao-tzu that is also associated with Chinese Traditional Medicine and Qigong.

Third Adjustment Adjusting or focusing the mind to concentration.

Three Adjustments Adjusting the posture and body to relax, regulating the breath, and concentrating the mind.

Tien Qi Heaven Qi.

Traditional Chinese Medicine Ancient Chinese medical practices that include acupuncture, herbal medicine, Qigong and other techniques.

Universal Qi The entire field of Qi around us and in everything.

Wudang Mountain A mountain range in China where martial arts and forms of Qigong are practiced.

Xia Dantien The energy gate located inside the lower abdomen.

Yang Expanding, warming, masculine, external, etc.

Yellow Emperor's Inner Scripture An Ancient Chinese medical text treated as a fundamental source for Chinese medicine. It is known in Chinese as the Huangdi Neijing.

Yin Contracting, cooling, feminine, internal, etc.

Yongquan The energy gate on the balls of the feet, also known as the Bubbling Springs points.

Zhan Zhuang A Qigong practice that involves standing still in a meditative manner. It is known in English as Standing Like a Tree.

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About Master Tianyou Hao

Qigong Master Tianyou Hao began meditation practices as a small boy in 1944, alongside his mother, following her example. While growing up, he never forgot this experience and her influence. As a young man, Master Hao began traditional Qigong training with Martial Arts Master Zhu Guo Zhen, and later refined techniques with Buddha Master Li Yuan. While a Professor of Engineering at Beijing University of Science and Technology, Master Hao learned from a young man who exhibited great Qigong abilities. Master Hao was also privileged to be guided by a woman centenarian, Grand Master Huong, who lives as a recluse in China.

In 1988, Master Hao arrived in the United States where he began the task of spreading Qigong knowledge to Americans. His educational programs display a dedicated approach to all aspects of Qigong. Master Hao has successfully adapted the best of Chinese Qigong to the Western culture. His students discovered and quickly learned to feel Qi, gather Qi, and use Qi for their personal healing and health, and for the benefit of others.

Since Master Hao's arrival in the United States, he developed the "Inner Dan Arts Qigong" and "Eastern Healing Arts" systems for westerners, teaching Qigong and Qi Healing to over 3000 students. From 1991 to 2001, Master Hao also taught courses in Qigong and Qi Healing at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. During this time, he trained and certified over 50 Qigong instructors nationwide and worldwide.

To keep Chinese Qigong open to the world, Master Hao established the Eastern Healing Arts Center to provide complementary health education for all, through certification of instructors and healers, while also promoting opportunities for learning.

About the Author

Har Har Singh Khalsa has studied Internal Arts for over forty years. He was mentored by world renown masters of various practices related to Qigong and energy work since he was a teenager. In 2013, Har Har began intensive training in Qigong, Tai Chi, and meditation. In 2015 he received certification as a Qigong instructor from the White Cloud Qigong institute, and from 2015 to 2019, Har Har went on to study at the Tai Chi & Qigong Academy under Qigong and Tai Chi Master, Richard Leirer, gaining certification as one of his select few instructors. In 2016, Har Har founded the Shen Ren Qigong Center, where he currently teaches Medical Qigong and Qi Healing techniques. In 2017, Har Har also studied with Master Ming Yue, in Wudang Mountain, China, learning a form of Qigong/Tai Chi that he teaches at the Shen Ren Qigong Center. From 2018 to present, Har Har has studied with Master Tianyou Hao, receiving certification in Qi Healing and Medical Qigong.

Through his years of study and practice, Har Har has developed methodology and techniques for sensing Qi, gathering Qi, and moving Qi throughout the body. Utilizing the training from various masters, combined with personal experience of internal awareness, Har Har offers a clear and concise pathway for learning the inner language of Qi as illustrated in his books on Qi and Body Awareness and Standing Like a Tree.

For more information, you may contact Har Har Singh Khalsa
at harhar@shenrenqigong.com

What is Standing Like a Tree?

Zhan Zhuang is a Chinese Qigong standing practice for health, that is also known as *Standing Like a Tree* in English. *Standing Like a Tree* practice originated centuries ago for the purpose of health and well-being. *Standing Like a Tree* is a metaphor for the specifics of this form. Standing still with the feet firmly planted on the ground, while drawing Qi from the Earth, is comparable to a tree, with its roots gaining sustenance from the soil. Also, our head receiving the Qi flow from the heavens, is like a tree receiving sunlight for nourishment.

Our particular *Standing Like a Tree* form is actually considered a mediation practice. Typically, we may think of meditation as a sitting practice. *Standing Like a Tree* is sometimes regarded as a more effective form of meditation because we remain physically alert while also in a meditative state. Additionally, the feet and legs play a role in the *Standing Like a Tree* meditation, as they become receptors for the Qi drawn from the field of the Earth. Since the meditation posture is in a standing position, the feet can receive *Earth Qi* more powerfully than if one were sitting.

There are many forms of *Standing Like a Tree*. However, there are key elements required to perform this practice correctly. When *Standing Like a Tree* is combined with mentally leading the Qi with the breath, it becomes a highly effective Qigong practice. Our *Standing Like a Tree practice* is therefore a part of *Medical Qigong*, which is a system for healing and strengthening the body, and for building a powerful flow of Qi!

